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House of Representatives

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March 22, 2007

D.C. Voting Rights: Myth vs. Fact

Get Beyond the FICTION. Do the Right Thing.

Dear Colleague,

Leading up to the vote on H.R 1433, the D.C. House Voting Rights Bill, I want to ask you to carefully consider the facts surrounding D.C., Congress and how they relate to each other. I hope you’ll find, as I have, that Congress has the power and the responsibility to right this historic wrong.

Tom Davis

Myth:

DC already has representation. Every Member of Congress has an interest in the city.

Fact:

King George III said this to American colonists seeking voting rights in Parliament. The colonists did not buy it then: “No taxation without representation.”

The “interest” that each Member has in the District of Columbia is more dispersed than a member of Congress who represents a congressional district. Congress does have plenary authority in the city, but no member has a personal political interest to understand the real needs that can be addressed through the action of the Congress.

Myth:

Article 2 of the Constitution says only states should have votes in the House. Thus, it would take a constitutional amendment to do what this bill seeks to do.

Fact:

As Viet Dinh, who helped the Bush Administration craft the USA Patriot Act, testified, Congress maintains authority over DC under the Constitution’s District Clause in Article 1, Section 8, Clause 17, and thus has the power to grant representation. Indeed, Congress did just that for the citizens of Maryland and Virginia for the ten years immediately after ceding the land for the District.